DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 453 258 TM 032 795

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TITLE The Long March: School Performance Goals and Progress Measures in State Accountability Systems.

SPONS AGENCY National Inst. on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking, and Management (ED/OERI), Washington, DC.

PUB DATE 2001-04-13

NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 10-14, 2001). For a paper related to the same study, see TM 032 782.

CONTRACT OERI-R308A60003

PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Accountability; Educational Assessment; *Educational Change; Educational Finance; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Federal Aid; *Financial Support; *Low Achievement; Profiles; State Aid; *State Programs; Surveys; Testing Programs

ABSTRACT

This paper uses data collected from the 50 states in year 2000 by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) to describe how states are holding schools accountable for student performance. The data collection process focused on policies in place during the 1999-2000 school year. Profiles prepared from this data represent the policy status of each state at that time. These findings show the variety of ways in which states define and measure student and school performance for Title I and non-Title I schools. Students are classified in as many as five categories of performance. School performance levels and goals are determined by the expected level of student performance, the percentage of students within a school that must meet the state's standards, and the length of time given to reach those standards. School success in relation to those goals can also be defined in a number of ways, including reaching an absolute target, making progress, and narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest performers. The differences in state definitions and expectations has major implications for the design of federal Title I policy. Schools with comparable levels of performance could be identified as being in need of improvement in one state, and thus eligible for federal, state, and local resources, but not selected in another state. The criteria for identifying low-performing schools often interact with the level of resources available to assist these schools. A major question will be the degree to which federal goals can or should override flexibility in the design of state accountability systems. (SLD)

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The Long March:

School Performance Goals and Progress Measures in State Accountability Systems

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Paper presented at
Session #35.41: The National Accountability Movement
Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
Seattle, Washington

April 13, 2001

TM032795

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The Long March: School Performance Goals and Progress Measures in State Accountability Systems[1]

In the last ten years, federal policymakers have paid increasing attention to issues of education accountability and school improvement. Under Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994, states are expected to establish challenging content and performance standards, implement assessments that measure students' performance against these standards, and hold schools and school systems accountable for the achievement of all students. Amendments to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) require that states include students with disabilities in state and district assessment programs with appropriate accommodations, and disaggregate and report their test scores.

Recently, the federal government has begun to target funds to low-performing schools to support the implementation of research-based school improvement practices. States target approximately 80 percent of their Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration program funds to low-performing Title I schools. Congress appropriated $134 million in FY 2000 and $225 million in FY 2001 for states to assist Title I schools that are in need of improvement. States and local districts receive additional federal funds to support reading initiatives, reduce class size and extend learning time in poorly-performing schools. In May 2000, President Clinton signed an executive order directing the U.S. Department of Education (ED) to focus its resources and technical assistance efforts on schools that have been identified as needing improvement and to report annually on school improvement efforts (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

President Bush's education proposal, "No Child Left Behind," reinforces and extends the federal government's push for education accountability. The President has called for states to hold schools and districts accountable for closing the achievement gap between economically disadvantaged and more advantaged students; to provide assistance to schools that have not made adequate progress in one year (compared to the two years in the current Title I legislation); to place schools in corrective action and offer public school choice to students in schools that have not improved in a two year period; and to provide vouchers to students who attend Title I schools that fail to make adequate progress after three years. In addition, schools and states that make significant progress in closing the achievement gap for their disadvantaged students will be eligible for state and federal financial rewards. States that fail to make adequate progress for their poor students could lose a portion of their Title I administrative funds.

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[1] The research reported in this paper was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking and Management (Grant #OERI-R308A60003). Opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Institute on Educational Governance, Finance, Policymaking and Management, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, US Department of Education; or the institutional partners of CPRE. Mark C. Duffy of CPRE and Kerstin Carlson LeFloch of the American Institutes for Research played significant roles in the collection and analysis of the 50 state data.

These federal policies and proposals have focused greater attention on how states hold schools and districts accountable for meeting the student content and performance standards they have established, and on how states (and districts) identify schools and districts for assistance. Title I of IASA requires states to determine whether schools are making *adequate yearly progress* (AYP) in bringing students up to state standards. Specifically, the law calls for AYP to be defined

> in a manner that (1) results in continuous and substantial yearly improvement of each school and local education agency sufficient to achieve the goal of all children...meeting the state's proficient and advanced levels of achievement; [and] (2) is sufficiently rigorous to achieve that goal within an appropriate timeframe. (As cited in Elmore and Rothman, 1999, p. 85).

Local school districts must then *identify for school improvement* any school that has not made adequate yearly progress for two consecutive school years and states must identify for improvement any district that has failed to make adequate progress toward meeting the state's performance standards for two consecutive years.

While this is a seemingly straightforward process, states (and districts) must make a series of decisions in defining AYP and identifying low-performing schools.

- First, they must select indicators of student performance. Under Title I of IASA, states must include the annual state assessment and may include other measures, such as attendance and dropout rates.

- Second, they must establish school performance goals, such as having 100 percent of students proficient on the state assessment by the year 2005.

- Third, states must define what they consider substantial and continuous progress toward that goal.

- Finally, using this definition of adequate yearly progress, states (and districts) must identify schools and districts in need of improvement (Goertz, Duffy and LeFloch, 2000).

States differ considerably in how they make these decisions. Some states measure student performance solely with a test, while others include attendance and other non-cognitive measures. Some states expect all students to reach proficiency over an extended time, while other states set lower, shorter-term goals for their schools. Some states define AYP as meeting a performance goal, while others focus on movement towards this target. Because of this variation in state policy, schools with comparable levels of student performance could be identified as in need of improvement in one state, but not in another.

This paper uses data collected from the 50 states in spring 2000 to describe how states are holding schools accountable for student performance. It begins with a brief description of the

study methodology and the context for our findings. The next two sections examine how states have addressed the second and third decision points identified above—setting school performance goals and defining adequate yearly progress. It ends with a brief discussion of the implications of these policies for the identification and support of low-performing schools.

Methodology

The findings reported here are drawn from a 50 state survey of state assessment and accountability systems conducted by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) between February and June 2000.[2] We focused our data collection on state policies that were in place during the 1999-2000 school year. We used a four-step process to collect and verify our data. First, we collected and analyzed extant data from secondary sources: weekly and special issues of Education Week such as *Quality Counts* (1999, 2000), the Council of Chief State School Officers (2000), the American Federation of Teachers (1998, 1999), and state department of education web sites. We then conducted semi-structured interviews with the directors of assessment, accountability and Title I programs in each of the states to confirm, clarify and update information collected from written sources. We also used these interviews to identify proposed changes in state policies. These interviews were often supplemented by materials sent by the respondents. The third step entailed writing an extensive profile on each state that included descriptive information on the state's assessment, inclusion, reporting, accountability, assistance and Title I policies and practices. Finally, we asked state respondents to verify the written profiles, and we incorporated suggested changes and corrections into the final profiles. The state profiles are available on the CPRE website: www.upenn.edu/gse/cpre.

The information included in this paper and in the state profiles is current as of the time at which a profile was verified by each state, generally between April and July 2000. One of the challenges of conducting this study is the transitional nature of many state accountability systems. Several states are in the process of redesigning assessment and accountability systems to meet state and/or federal policy requirements, including those of Title I. Even states with established accountability systems, like Kentucky, have modified their policies in response to technical and/or political concerns. Many states put new assessment and/or accountability systems into place in 2000-2001. Other states will implement new policies starting in 2001 or later.

Thus, we found ourselves studying a moving target. We have addressed this policy flux in the following way. The data reported here represent policies in place in 1999-2000 unless a state (1) had enacted and planned to implement revised policies in 2000-2001; (2) had enacted new policies for 2000-2001 and reported it was awaiting federal approval of their new system for Title I; or (3) had proposed new policies for the 2000-2001 school year and was awaiting approval by its state board of education. In these three cases, we treat new policies as current practice. If a state had enacted or proposed policies that were scheduled to be implemented after the 2000-2001 school year, we report the policies in place in 1999-2000 as current practice.

[2] The findings from this larger study are reported in Goertz and Duffy (2001).

Setting Student Performance Levels

Title I calls for states to establish at least three levels of student performance on state assessments—advanced, proficient, and partially proficient—to show how well students are mastering the material in state content standards. Nearly all of the states with statewide assessments have student performance levels in place for the 2000-2001 school year. A few states that use norm-referenced tests had not developed performance standards for these assessments, reporting results by national percentile rank (NPR). As of January 2001, the U.S. Department of Education had approved performance standards in only 28 states (U.S. Department of Education, 2001).

Most states (37) have created four to five student performance levels, generally adding an additional category of partial proficiency. Kentucky, for example, expanded its performance reporting to eight levels of achievement in order to capture progress being made by students below proficiency. Two states, however, have only two proficiency categories. Some state set different performance levels for different tests. Michigan, for example, has designed a separate system for each subject assessed, with either two, three or four student proficiency categories, depending on the subject reported and grade level assessed.

Student Performance Levels: Two Approaches

Colorado and Minnesota provide two approaches to setting student performance levels:

Colorado describes student performance as:

- Advanced
- Proficient
- Partially Proficient, or
- Unsatisfactory.

Minnesota describes student performance for testing in grades three and five with levels:

- Level 1: Little Evidence of Knowledge and Skills
- Level 2: Partial Knowledge and Skills
- Level 3: Solid Academic Performance
- Level 4: Superior Performance,

but has one performance level for its 8th and 10th grade reading and mathematics tests—answering 75 percent of the questions correctly.

States use these performance categories for multiple purposes, including student reporting, retention and granting a high school diploma. The language used to describe student performance is not standardized across states either. For example, the levels used to describe performance that meets standards include "proficient" (e.g., Colorado), "solid academic performance" (Minnesota), and "meets standards" (Michigan). Students below standards are considered "partially proficient," having "partial knowledge or little evidence of knowledge and skills," and "pre-emerging." The use of proficiency labels gained widespread public attention in Michigan where high school assessment performance is noted on students' high school diplomas. In 1997, the Michigan legislature suspended endorsing students' diplomas with "novice" and "not yet novice" designations after parental protests. In 1998, legislative amendments changed the name and proficiency levels of the tests. The two lowest levels are now called "endorsed at basic level" and "unendorsed."

Performance Goals for Schools

Accountability systems are designed, in part, to ensure that schools and school districts make continuous and substantial progress, within an appropriate timeframe, toward the goal of having all students meet the states' proficient and advanced levels of achievement. This section looks at the actual goals that states have established for their schools. Do they expect schools to bring all students to the proficient level or have they set different expectations against which to measure a school's progress?

For the purpose of this analysis, the states were grouped based on who sets goals for the education system and the extent to which schools and districts are held accountable for student performance. The three categories are:

- public reporting systems;
- locally-defined accountability systems; and
- state-defined accountability systems.

All states report annually on student performance. Only 13 states, however, use public reporting as their primary accountability mechanism.[3] A handful of other states have developed accountability systems that emphasize local standards and local planning. These states allow districts to establish criteria for school performance, but use strategic plans or district and school improvement plans to hold districts accountable for student performance. The remaining 33 states set performance goals for schools and/or school systems and hold these units directly accountable for meeting these outcome goals. These states also establish rewards for meeting or exceeding state goals and/or sanctions for not meeting their target. This section describes the performance goals for *all* schools (not just Title I) that have been designed and implemented in these 33 states with state-defined accountability systems.[4]

There is a wide variation in school performance goals across these states with state-defined accountability systems. State targets appear to vary along three dimensions: (1) the expected level of student performance (e.g., basic, proficient); (2) the percentage of students schools must get to these standards; and (3) the length of time schools are given to meet their goal. Where states set their school performance goals, reflects, in part, their strategy of how to create incentives for growth and change. As we see in the next section, the level of school performance goals interacts with the states' definition of adequate yearly progress. And, goal-setting is, in part, a political process.

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[3] Many of these states have developed performance targets for their Title I schools, and some have enacted input-based accreditation policies.

[4] This analysis does not include separate performance goals that some of these states and the other 17 states have established for Title I schools. An earlier analysis of state Title I policies found the same variation in goals, however (Goertz, Duffy and LeFloch, 2000).

Most states expect to bring some or all of their students to the "proficient" level of performance. The measure of proficiency is not comparable across states, however. States use different assessments aligned with different standards and set different cut scores for each performance level. A student who is proficient on Rhode Island's assessment, for example, may (or may not) exhibit a different level and/or mix of knowledge and skills than a student who scores at the proficient level in Maryland or Wisconsin. A few states focus on having students achieve a more basic level of performance. Florida, for example, gives grades of "A" and "B" to schools where at least half of the students reach Level 3 on the state assessment ("the student has partial success with the state standards"). Louisiana's 10-year goal is to have all students at the "basic" level; a student at this level "has demonstrated only the fundamental knowledge and skills needed for the next level of schooling."

States also differ in the percentage of students that schools are expected to bring up to the basic or proficient standard. About seven states specify that they expect 90 percent to 100 percent of students to reach proficiency, about eight states specify they expect 60 percent to 85 percent to reach this level, and about another eight states set the goal at 50 percent of students meeting the assessment target.[5]

Finally, states set different timelines for meeting these performance goals. A half dozen states have established explicit target dates, ranging from five to twenty years. Some examples are having 100 percent of students at standards by 2008 (Vermont) or 2010 (Oregon) and having a school improvement index of 100 by 2014 (Kentucky). A second group of states does not specify target dates for meeting standards, but uses progress targets as an implicit timeline for moving schools toward the state's performance goals. California, for example, has set an interim goal for its Academic Performance Indicator of 800. The state assigns each school an Annual Growth Target (of at least five percent) based on the distance between its current performance and the state goal.

A few states set lower, but more immediate (and in their opinion, more achievable) performance goals, intending to raise these goals over time. Texas is an example of this strategy. When the state enacted its reform, it rated schools as "acceptable" if 25 percent of their students passed the state assessment. The state raised this threshold by five percentage points a year, to the current level of 50 percent passing. Virginia has set a passing rate of 40 percent to 60 percent (depending on the subject) on its tests for the year 2000. In the year 2006, however, at least 70 percent of students will need to pass the state assessments in English, except for third and fifth grade students (75 percent must pass) and at least 60 percent of students will need to pass the state assessments in three other core areas (except third and fifth grade mathematics). As New York phases in its new accountability system, schools are initially expected to get 90 percent of their students to Level 2, which is defined as "students will need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents exam." Starting in September 2000, the Commissioner of Education in New York will determine annually what percentage of students should perform at or above the proficient level (Level 3) for schools to meet accountability goals.

[5] Four states are in the process of setting performance targets. The remaining six states do not define their long-term goals as a percentage of students meeting a proficiency standard.

About half of the states that set performance goals have created multiple performance thresholds for their schools that distinguish schools that are low performing from those that far exceed state standards. Texas, for example, has four school performance levels: exemplary, recognized, acceptable and low performing. A school's placement in one of these levels is determined by its performance on three indicators: the percentage of students passing the TAAS, the percentage of students dropping out of school and the attendance rate. Thus, for the 1999-2000 school year, the state rated a school as "low-performing" if fewer than 50 percent of its students and of each student subgroup passed the state assessment in each grade and subject area, had a dropout rate of more than six percent for all students and subgroups, and had an attendance rate below 94 percent. To obtain "exemplary" status, schools had to achieve a 90 percent passing rate on TAAS and a dropout rate of one percent or less.

As with student performance levels, states differ in the number of categories they create and the terminology they use to describe different levels of performance. Florida assigns letter grades (A, B,C, D, and F) to its five performance categories that reflect the percentage of students scoring at or above Level 2 (minimum criteria) or Level 3 (higher criteria) on the state assessment. Michigan uses accreditation terminology to classify its schools: a school receives "summary" accreditation if at least two-thirds of its students score at the highest performance level on all of the state assessments, and an "interim" accreditation if more than half of its students meet this goal on at least one assessment. Massachusetts has six performance categories (very high to critically low) and four improvement categories. Four other states—California, Kentucky, Maryland and Vermont—assign composite index numbers to schools that show their position relative to a state goal. An SPI of 100 in Maryland or 800 in California, for example, means that the school has met all of the states' standards. Under the new accountability system in Vermont, each school is notified of its Change Index Growth Target, defined as the difference between the school's Baseline Index and the State Board's goal of 500 on the performance level point scale, divided by the number of accountability cycles remaining through school year 2007-2008.

How Do States Define Progress for All Schools?

Once states have established school-level performance goals, they must determine how they will measure annual progress towards these goals. Title I legislation calls for states to define what they consider substantial and continuous progress toward performance goals and then, using these definitions of adequate yearly progress, identify schools and districts in need of improvement.

The 33 states with performance-based accountability systems use at least one of three approaches to measure school progress:

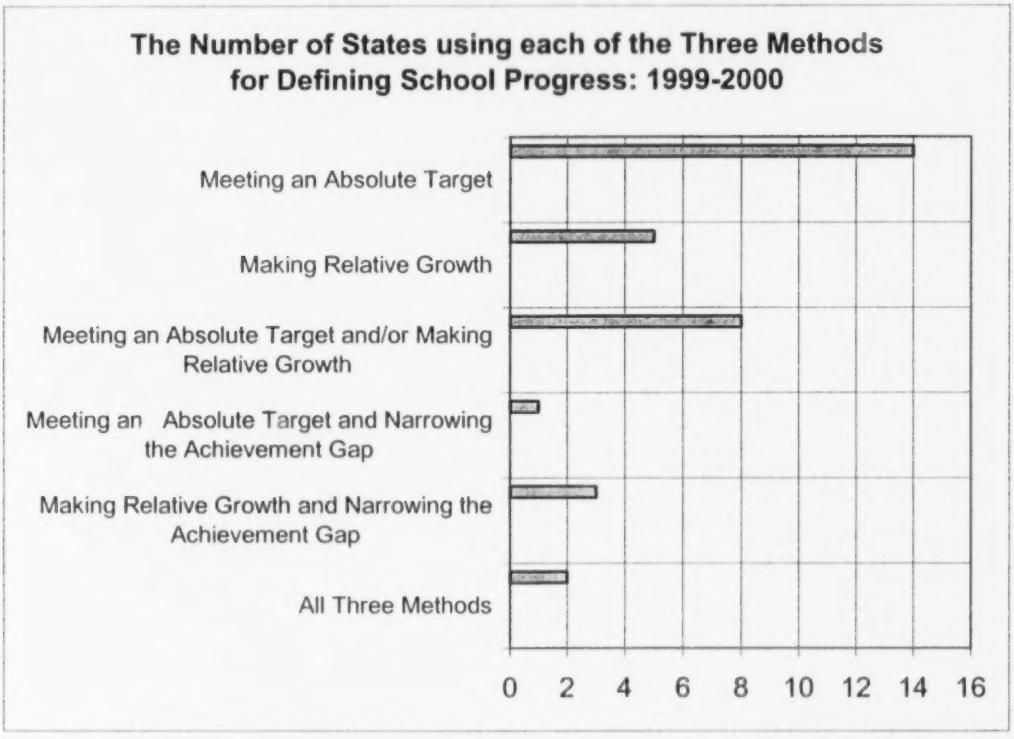
- Meet an *absolute* target: achieve a performance threshold or thresholds to make satisfactory progress;

- Make *relative* growth: meet an annual growth target that is based on each school's past performance and often reflects its distance from state goals; and/or

- Narrow the *achievement gap*: reduce the number or percentage of students scoring in the lowest performance levels.

Fourteen of the states use only absolute targets as their definition of progress, while five states use only relative growth expectations. Eight states employ both an absolute target and relative growth in their progress definition. The remaining six states use narrowing the achievement gap as at least one criterion of adequate yearly progress (Figure 1 and Table 1).[6]

Figure 1



Florida and Texas provide examples of states that use absolute targets. Florida grades schools on a scale of A to F. A school earns each grade by meeting specific performance standards. For example, at least 60 percent of a school's students must score at Level 2 ("limited success at meeting state content standards") on the state assessments in reading, mathematics and writing to receive a grade of "C." Schools that do not meet this criterion in *any* of the three tested areas are given a grade of "F" and are judged as not making adequate yearly progress. Texas defines AYP as achieving the state's "acceptable" rating. For a school to have been rated "acceptable" in 1999-2000, at least 50 percent of students in each sub-group had to pass the state

[6] Twenty-two of these 33 states apply these definitions of AYP to all schools. The other eleven states have different definitions for their Title I and non-Title I schools. The AYP definitions discussed here apply to non-Title I schools in these latter states.

Table 1: Categories of Defining School Progress in State-Defined Performance-Based Accountability Systems, 1999-2000

State	Meeting an Absolute Target	and/ or	Making Relative Growth	and/ or	Narrowing the Achievement Gap
Alabama	x				
Arkansas	x	or	x		
California			x		
Colorado	x	and	x		
Connecticut	x				
Delaware [1]	x	and	x	and	x
Florida	x				
Illinois	x			and	x
Indiana	x				
Kentucky			x	and	x
Louisiana	x	or	x		
Maryland			x		
Massachusetts [1]	x	and	x		
Michigan	x				
Missouri*			x	and	x
Mississippi*	x				
Nevada	x				
New Jersey	x				
New Mexico [3]	x				
New York [3]	x	or	x		
North Carolina	x	or	x		
Ohio*	x	or	x		
Oklahoma	x				
Oregon [2]	x				
Pennsylvania			x		
Rhode Island			x	and	x
South Carolina*			x		
Tennessee	x	or	x		
Texas	x				
Vermont [1]			x		
Virginia	x				
West Virginia	x				
Wisconsin	x	or	x	and	x

1. To be implemented 2000-2001.
2. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending Federal approval.
3. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending state board approval.

* For the purposes of Table 1, four states have been categorized based on their district accountability criteria for various reasons. Although **Missouri** holds schools as well as districts accountable, the state's achievement goals are part of the Missouri School Improvement Program at the *district* level. **Ohio** designates each *district* as Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch, or Academic Emergency and does not have school-level performance-based accountability. In two other states (Mississippi and South Carolina), the systems of accountability are in a transitional phase, moving from district to school accountability systems. The **Mississippi** state system of accreditation had ranked *districts* on a scale of 1 to 5; districts have been held harmless under this system for the 1999-2000 and 2000-2001 school years as the state moves to a system of school-based accountability. **South Carolina's** previous – and not yet entirely replaced – accountability system identified *districts* as impaired on the basis of 35 indicators: school districts were required to satisfy two-thirds of the standards for the BSAP and MAT7 achievement test results and two-thirds of the non-cognitive indicators.

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assessment in reading, writing and mathematics, the drop out rate had to be six percent or less, and the student attendance rate had to be at least 94 percent.

The use of relative criteria emphasizes continuous improvement. Maryland and California provide examples of states that have established annual goals for their schools that require continuous progress towards a state-specified performance target. California recently assigned schools individualized annual growth targets that are based on five percent of the difference between their Academic Performance Index baseline score for July 1999 and the statewide interim performance target of 800. In contrast, Maryland only requires schools to show "statistically significant" change in their School Performance Indices. The SPI, however, is re-calculated annually to reflect how far the school is from meeting state performance goals.

Eight states require schools to meet an absolute target and/or make relative growth; schools in six of these states must meet an absolute target *or* make relative growth, while schools in the other two states must meet an absolute target *and* make relative growth. In North Carolina, for example, a school makes AYP if it either meets the absolute performance minimum threshold (not more than 50 percent of students below grade level) or its expected growth goal. Under the new School Performance Rating Process, Massachusetts will require schools to meet both criteria. Each school will be assigned an overall performance rating (absolute target) and an overall improvement rating (relative growth). The state will combine these measures when placing a school in a performance category.

The remaining six states require schools to show evidence they have narrowed the achievement gap between low- and high-performing students. Three of these states require schools to both narrow the achievement gap and make gains on their average scores. For example, Rhode Island requires schools to increase both overall performance and the performance of students in the lowest-performing category by three to five percent a year. Illinois is the only state that requires schools to meet an absolute target and to narrow the performance gap. Two states use all three AYP methods. Starting in 2000-2001, Delaware, for example, will rate schools on three factors: 1) the absolute performance of all the school's students on state assessments ("absolute performance"); 2) the school's record in improving the performance of all the school's students on the assessments ("improvement performance"); and 3) the school's record in improving the performance of students at lower levels of achievements on the assessments ("distributional performance").

How Do States Define Adequate Yearly Progress for Title I Schools?

The intent of IASA was to create single and "seamless" accountability systems that would treat all schools equally. States were expected to develop aligned systems of high standards, challenging assessments and accountability, and then align their Title I programs with these policies. We found, however, that fewer than half of the states (22) have developed "unitary" systems of accountability in which all schools are held to the same definition of progress (Goertz, Duffy and LeFloch, 2000).[7] For this reason, it is important to include in our

[7] When categorizing state accountability systems as unitary or dual, we looked at the performance indicators, school performance goals, and measures of adequate yearly progress used to hold schools

discussion how the states have defined adequate yearly progress for Title I schools as well as all schools.

In looking across the 50 states at *both* those states with unitary or aligned systems for both Title I and non-Title I schools and those systems designed only for Title I schools, only Iowa has not developed a state plan for defining adequate yearly progress in Title I schools. Twelve states use absolute targets as the only measure of making adequate yearly progress in Title I schools. The remaining 37 states incorporate some measure of continuous progress in their adequate yearly progress (AYP) definitions, either as the sole measure or in combination other measures. Eight states require that schools make relative growth as the sole measure of AYP, while nine more require schools to narrow the achievement gap between those students scoring at the lowest and highest levels on the state assessment. The other 20 states use some combination of absolute, relative growth and narrowing the achievement gap measures (Figure 2 and Table 2).

Considerably more states—fifteen—have incorporated some measure of closing the achievement gap in their Title I AYP definitions than they have in their general accountability systems (6 states). Nine states use this as their sole definition of AYP under Title I. Michigan, for example, requires Title I schools to reduce by 10 percent the gap in the percentage of students scoring in the highest and lowest performance levels on the state assessments. Each school's achievement gap and improvement goal are calculated annually and separately for each subject area that is assessed. Schools are held accountable for closing the gap in all subject areas. Missouri has developed several options for schools in narrowing the gap. In order to make Adequate Yearly Progress in Missouri, a Title I school or district must achieve:

- At least a five percent (5%) increase in the composite percent of students in the upper three performance levels and at least a five percent (5%) decrease in the percent of students appearing in the bottom performance level; or

- A twenty percent (20%) decrease in the percent of students appearing in the bottom performance level in schools in which at least forty percent (40%) of the class group is represented in the bottom level; or

- Any year in which the percent of students in the bottom performance levels equals 5% or less the district will have made Adequate Yearly Progress.

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accountable and at the consequences of the accountability system. We did not include the kinds of assistance that would result from the system of accountability. Even within the category of unitary systems, we found slight differences between the indicators used to measure the performance of Title I and non-Title I schools. In West Virginia, for example, the definition of adequate yearly progress is based on performance on the SAT9, and does not consider attendance and dropout rates which are included in the general state accountability system. As the general and Title I systems are identical with regard to what is expected of schools in terms of performance on the state assessment, we classified the state as having a unitary system.

Figure 2

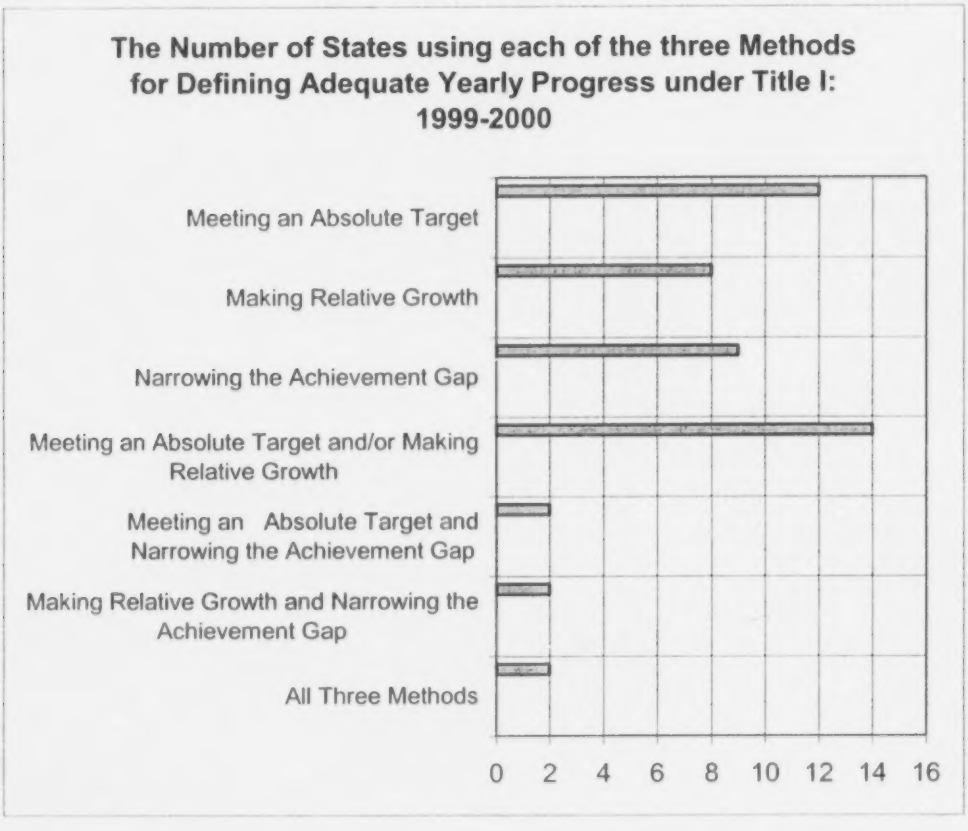
The Number of States using each of the three Methods for Defining Adequate Yearly Progress under Title I: 1999-2000
Meeting an Absolute Target
Making Relative Growth
Narrowing the Achievement Gap
Meeting an Absolute Target and/or Making Relative Growth
Meeting an Absolute Target and Narrowing the Achievement Gap
Making Relative Growth and Narrowing the Achievement Gap
All Three Methods
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16

Table 2: Categories of Defining Title I Adequate Yearly Progress, 1999-2000					
State	Meeting an Absolute Target	and/ or	Making Relative Growth	and/ or	Narrowing the Achievement Gap
Alabama	X				
Alaska	X				
Arizona	X	or	x		
Arkansas	X				
California			x		
Colorado					x
Connecticut	X				
Delaware [1]	X	and	x	and	x
Florida	X				
Georgia [3]	X			and	x
Hawaii	X	or	x		
Idaho			x		
Illinois	X			and	x
Indiana	X	or	x		
Iowa	n/a		n/a		n/a
Kansas [3]	X	or	x		
Kentucky			x	and	x
Louisiana	X	or	x		
Maine [2]					x
Maryland			x		
Massachusetts [1]	X	and	x		
Michigan					x
Minnesota			x		
Missouri					x
Mississippi	X	and	x		
Montana	X				
Nebraska					x
Nevada					x
New Hampshire [2]	X	and	x		
New Jersey	X				
New Mexico [3]	X				
New York [3]	X	or	x		
North Carolina	X	or	x		
North Dakota			x		
Ohio	X	or	x		
Oklahoma	X	or	x		
Oregon [2]	X				
Pennsylvania					x
Rhode Island			x	and	x
South Carolina	X	or	x		
South Dakota					x
Tennessee			x		
Texas	X				
Utah	X	or	x		
Vermont [1]			x		
Virginia	X				
Washington					x
West Virginia	X				
Wisconsin	X	or	x	and	x
Wyoming [1]			x		

1. To be implemented 2000-2001.
2. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending Federal approval.
3. To be implemented 2000-2001, pending State Board approval.

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Subgroup Performance as an Equity Indicator

Although 15 states have addressed the achievement gap between the lowest and highest performing students by defining adequate yearly progress for Title I schools in terms of moving students from one achievement level to next higher level, a handful of states have addressed the issue through the inclusion of subgroup performance to differing degrees. States have included adequate subgroup performance in one of three ways under Title I:

- as a *requirement* for adequate yearly progress,
- as a requirement to be eligible for a *state rewards program*, or
- as a *secondary accountability indicator*.

Only two states include or plan to include adequate performance among subgroups as part of their AYP definition.

- To receive a rating of "acceptable" in Texas, each racial/ethnic (African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian) and socio-economic (economically disadvantaged) subgroup, as well as the total student population in a school and a district, must meet the performance targets for each subject and non-cognitive indicator.

- Under Maine's adequate yearly progress proposal to the United States Department of Education, the data used to determine AYP will be based on the results from the following groups:

  1. the *entire student population* that completed the tests, and

  2. *subgroups* selected by the school from the following options: student receiving free or reduced priced lunch, special education students, LEP students, migrant students, and racial/ethnic minorities.

Other states with unitary accountability systems have begun to include subgroup performance in *rewards programs*. Under new policies in California and Maryland, for example, state rewards and recognition will take into consideration the performance of minority and other subpopulations in each school. To receive a grade of "A" or "B" in Florida, a school must ensure that racial/ethnic subgroups (African-American, Hispanic, Caucasian, Asian and American Indian students) and poor students meet minimum performance criteria. To be eligible for rewards in Louisiana, schools are required to show improvement in at-risk population scores.

A few states also use subgroup performance as a *secondary indicator* within the Title I accountability system. Rhode Island's accountability system provides an example of such a state. Specifically, the state targets subgroup performance using a model that considers the characteristics of the student body to establish achievement benchmarks that acknowledge the challenges of different children. Subgroups of students within a school are compared with similar groups of students statewide. If a school finds a discrepancy of more than 15 percent

between the achievement of these subgroups and the state benchmarks, then the school must create a plan to address this issue.

Implications for Identifying and Supporting Low-Performing Schools

This paper has shown the variety of ways in which states define and measure student and school performance for both Title I and non-Title I schools. Students are classified in as many as five categories of performance. School performance levels and goals are determined by the expected level of student performance, the percentage of students within a school that must meet the state's standards and the length of time given to reach those standards. School success in relation to these goals can also be defined in a number of ways, including reaching an absolute target, making progress and narrowing the gap between the highest and lowest achievers.

The level of a state's performance goals and definition of adequate yearly progress yield different expectations for student performance and school growth. As a result, schools with comparable levels of student performance could be identified as in need of improvement in one state (and thus eligible for additional state, federal and local resources and/or subject to state or federal sanctions), but not in another state. Each state's policies also drive the number of schools states and/or districts will identify as low-performing and therefore eligible for school improvement support. Criteria for identifying low-performing schools often interact with the level of resources available to assist these buildings. If states or districts have limited resources, they may not serve all schools that have not met their AYP goals for the year. Assistance may be limited to the most troubled schools.

This range in state accountability policy has major implications for the design of federal Title I policy. States with lower performance goals or less stringent AYP criteria may have little to fear from proposed federal sanctions, particularly the proposed voucher requirement. States that do not include measures focused on closing the achievement gap in their AYP definitions will not be eligible for proposed federal financial rewards, but they may be subject to proposed financial sanctions. The Bush administration proposals raise, once again, inherent tensions in our federal system. To what extent can, or should, federal goals, such as narrowing the achievement gap between poor and more affluent students, override flexibility in the design of state accountability systems? How prescriptive can the federal government become in determining how we define failing and successful schools? How will these state and federal decisions drive the allocation of scarce resources that are needed to support school improvement?

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